

Factors Affecting Prayer for the Sick

1. **God's goodness:** Ps 103:13 "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." God has compassion on His creation, and doesn't need to be begged or bargained with in order to respond to the needs of His people.
2. **God's pity and compassion:** Matt. 20:34 "Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."
3. **Sin in the life:** Ps 66:18 "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." A relationship with God enhances one's prayer life.
4. **Insensitivity to the needs of others:** Pro 21:13 "If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered." Prayer involves God speaking to the heart, sensitizing one to the needs of others.
5. **Opposition to God's Will:** Pro 28:9 "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable." Prayer is a two-way street in relationship with God that produces a willingness to make God Lord of one's life.
6. **Unwillingness to listen to God:** Zech 7:13 "When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen." Unwillingness to follow the leading of God in the life can result in God not responding to one's prayers.
7. **Asking selfishly:** Ja 4:3 "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." This principal is in direct opposition to the prosperity model advocated by some. We are to ask for things that are for the glory of God and the benefit of others.
8. **Satan is the ruler of this world:** John 12:31 Satan is the ruler of this world so God has limited Himself in what He can do. If He would intervene every time His people face sickness, death or problems Satan would call foul and accuse God of taking over his kingdom.
9. **The overlapping kingdoms:** The Kingdom of God has come, but not in its fullness, God's power has broken in on the present evil age, but not completely. We taste and see the goodness and power of God, but only partially, therefore, while we can experience healings, miracles and the power of God here and now, it is not complete or in all cases.
10. **Satan is the designer and spreader of evil, sickness and death:** Mt 13:38, Job 1:11, 1 Pe 5:8. Since Satan is the ruler of this world and it is he who brings every kind of misery, sickness and disease, we must always remember that it is not God withholding His goodness, but rather Satan working the results of his kingdom that cause the problems in life. Therefore, if anyone is to be blamed for suffering in this world it is the devil, and not God.
11. **We receive little because we ask for little:** Ja 4:2 "You do not have, because you do not ask."
12. **If we do not bring our petitions to Christ it also shows a lack of trust or understanding of God:** 2Chron. 16. When Asa, king of Judah was sick and **only** consulted the doctors, God was not happy with that. God and medicine are not mutually exclusive. We need to trust in God, ask Him for healing and also make use of medical knowledge and science.

Ellen G. White and Prayer for the Sick

Ellen White was a strong supporter of prayer for the sick, stressing that God never turns away from the sincere seeker, that God is just as willing to restore the sick today as when the psalmist wrote (Ps. 107:20) that God heals (MH 225), and that Christ has the same compassion today for the sick as when He was on this earth (FLB 315).

Ellen's White's theology was very clear concerning the cause and remedy for sickness, suffering and death. Satan and the sin that resulted from his rebellion are clearly identified as the cause for both physical and spiritual disease. It is God who restores (MM 11), not humans or anointing services and not even God's chosen messenger (3SM 295). Healing is God's work.

Ellen White took part in anointing services even though she was not an ordained elder (5MR 239). She believed that the encouragement to call the elders for prayer and anointing in James 5 was for those "among us" and should be restricted to a ceremony for those who keep God's commandments (MR 324). Anointing services should not be employed for every little ailment, but should be for those who are sick upon their beds (MM 16).

Not all of the sick that church members pray for will be healed. Neither should a lack of healing be used as a basis for telling the sick person that they lack faith (GW 218). Rather, the sick among us should be encouraged to trust in Jesus, to be cheerful, and to put aside discouragement. Anxiousness and worry do nothing to encourage health and healing, but actually lead to weakness and disease (MH 229).

Two conditions are mentioned that often hinder God from His work of healing. 1). When the people in the church are covetous and worldly, God cannot work through them, for unbelief and sin block the power of God. Those praying for the sick must live holy lives (2SM 347), and should not expect the promises for healing to be fulfilled if they are living in sin (MH 227). 2). God's people are unable to deal correctly with spiritual blessings and healings. Instead of giving God the glory and realizing that God heals because he is loving and compassionate, believers often take the credit for themselves, feeling that they are good and righteous, therefore God has blessed by healing through their prayers (2T 149).

One of Ellen White's statements (MM 14) seems to contradict the many other statements concerning God's willingness to heal when she says that God cannot now work through miraculous healings because Satan also performs such miracles. The statement was made in the context of early Adventism when many miraculous healings occurred as a direct answer to prayer, but those healed continued to practice the same unhealthful lifestyle (White 387). Mrs. White suggested that what was needed was a place such as a sanitarium where the teaching of principles of healthful living could be combined with the teaching of the Word of God (MM 14).

Several general principles dealing with prayer for the sick are stressed. Perhaps that which is most often neglected in the Christian world is the importance of combining faith in God's healing power with a personal work by the sick person to practice principles of healthful living

(HL 238). The sick should use simple remedies and observe the laws of health and life (CD 26), and do everything within their power to encourage healing.

Prayers offered for the sick should take the form of petitions and not commands for healings (MH 230, GW 218), since only God knows what is right and best for each situation (2T 148). Early on in Ellen White's ministry she and others had prayed insistent prayers for the sick only to see them, after being healed, continue to live degraded and sinful lives, bringing shame upon their families, their church and their God (2T 148). Therefore, those praying for the sick should only pray for God's will to be done in each situation (GW 217).

Modern healing services where the pastor or evangelist shouts and commands the sick to be healed do not fall within the parameters of God's ideal. Healings do not happen because of shouting, excitement, or zeal, but because of God's compassion and will to heal (2T 147). Ellen White often refers to praying for the sick as a solemn task, not something to enter into lightly or presumptuously.

Prayers of presumption would include praying for those who have total disregard for healthful habits of eating, drinking, dressing and working or praying for those living in open sin and rebellion (MH 227, 228). Before praying for the sick provision should be made for the sick person to make restitution, for sins to be confessed and for wrongs to be righted (HL 236). But that does not mean that we should not pray for those who break the laws of health, or for those who live outside of God's will, rather we should combine prayer with education concerning God's will and teach the principles of health (MH227, GW 215).

Christ still desires to show His presence in the sickroom, but when people neglect to pray, the sick are deprived of God's blessing (MM 195). The church today would see many more healings if more prayers were offered for the sick (3SM 295).